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“Adonai S’Fatai” and “Misheberach”**
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**Songs And Action:
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Editorial

***Musica Est Donum* (Music is a Gift):
The Launch of a New Online Music Journal**

John L. Vitale

After 20 years of professional service as a music educator at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels, I still struggle with the philosophical meaning and significance of this thing we call music. As someone who has always argued that the purpose of education is about the asking of questions and not the seeking of answers, my philosophical struggle with the meaning of music is actually a good thing. In all of the music making and music teaching that I have engaged in over the years, however, one specific philosophical notion has consistently manifested itself time and time again. Simply put, the notion that all musical experiences are first and foremost a precious and priceless gift. Although this notion may be as old as time itself, it has taken on a profound meaning in my own life -- a “raison d'être” for my past, present, and future musical experiences. Whether performing, teaching, or listening to music, I have come to recognize how truly special music really is.

Musical experiences, however, have drastically changed in a rather short time. Our current digital age of mp3 players, cell phones, websites, music apps, tablets, social media, etc. has in many ways created a new paradigm of ubiquitous musical experiences for music-makers and music-listeners alike. I believe this new paradigm, however, is changing the very relationship and connection people have with music. What should be a meaningful encounter has quickly become a common, everyday experience for the vast majority of the population in the Western World. Furthermore, I also believe that this

“common experience” has made music listening, music making, and music education less meaningful for so many people, which needless to say, is quite problematic.

This very precarious mindset was essentially the catalyst behind the conception of *Musica Est Donum* (music is a gift), a peer-reviewed, online music journal that aims to critically describe and celebrate the common, everyday musical experience as an extraordinary and special gift. In particular, *MED* encourages articles that promote the educational, social, cultural, economic, political, religious, and psychological aspects of everyday musical experiences. *MED* will publish articles in a variety of scholarly formats, including original research, opinion papers, general discussions, book reviews, and selected creative works (musical compositions/arrangements, visual art, film, fictional narratives, etc.).

I am hopeful that our readers will critically reflect on the role of musical experiences in their daily lives and consider submitting an article to this new journal. In an attempt to broaden the scope of the journal, *MED* would also like to receive submissions from contributors who are not musical in the traditional sense. Hence, the 17-member editorial board of the journal consists of both music and non-music scholars alike from across the globe, including the USA, the UK, Israel, South Africa, Japan, and Canada.

Articles will be published on a rolling basis per calendar year. *MED* will provide open access to all articles under the premise that making research freely accessible to the public supports a greater exchange and dissemination of knowledge. For more information about the journal and submission guidelines, please visit: musicaestdonum.weebly.com

**Transformation through Musical and Somatic Practice:
My Learning Experience with Debussy Piano Préludes and Yoga**

Jennifer Yu

Abstract

The scholarship of creating musical performances is the main topic of this article. The manifold layers of the researcher's music learning process are scrutinized to glean an understanding of her personal and musical transformation through the repertoire study of the 24 Debussy piano Préludes and yoga practice. To start, she consulted the existing literature on the cultural and artistic climate of Debussy's era. By investigating the composer's sources of inspiration, the author began to create her personal knowledge base of this repertoire. Using the somatic tools of body-mind awareness and self-reflection, the researcher described her musical transformation during the performance preparation. Recording analyses of her own recitals, as well as other artistic interpretations, of the Debussy Préludes were made to relate the transformation in the projection of her musical conception and listening attitude.

Key Words

performance, learning, transformation, somatic, music

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Points of Departure: Listening, Recontextualizing, and Learning

As a student of life, musician, pianist, and freelance music teacher in Canada, my own musical formation and practice has run a parallel course to my geographic relocation and cultural fusion. With grandparents from the coastal provinces of China, I was born in Taiwan and lived my first 14 years with the idea that there was a big world to be explored outside my native island.

With many music lovers in both my immediate and extended families, hearing selections of symphonic music for children was one of my earliest recollections. While listening to various compositions and looking up their descriptive titles in the cassette covers, I marveled at the images of stories and characters that came alive in my mind. As my musical skills developed with the instrumental study of piano, clarinet, and the enrolment in a full-time music program of the Taiwanese public school system, my interest in my parents' recording collection went beyond boundaries of the children's corner.

While rummaging around in my father's cassette drawers, I came across the string quartets of two 20th century French composers, Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel, and put this cassette in the tape player. What I heard astonished me. The string instruments sounded like human voices that declaimed, chuckled, conversed, sang, and whispered wordlessly. To my ears, the music was so expressive and yet, so mysterious. What was it saying? From where did it come? To my mind, the sound of this music represented a window to a foreign and enigmatic world. Repeatedly, I listened to this tape and wondered.

After my family immigrated to Canada, my musical training continued in Toronto and in Paris, France. While I was adjusting to the changes of environment, climate, culture, and language, my musical horizons also began to broaden. Having direct sensory experiences of hearing and pronouncing musical terms in their original languages, seeing actual artworks of the Impressionist movement, attending concerts of symphony, chamber music, and solo recital, and treading on the same ground where generations of artists lived and worked was completely different from collecting intellectual information. This personal knowledge provided a whole new context for the cultivation of my musical comprehension and the enrichment of my tonal imagination.

While enjoying the process of experiential learning and the fruit of musical maturation, I have also pondered over the possible correlation between these two aspects of my knowledge acquisition. During the period between 2007 and 2014, I took the opportunities of repertoire study and performance of the 24 Debussy *Préludes* for piano, intensive yoga practice, and academic research to examine my personal learning experience and musical transformation.

Methodology: Four Viewpoints of Self-Study

In this article, multiple aspects of my experience in studying and performing two Debussy *Préludes* shall be examined and narrated to illustrate a transformative learning process. Existing resources on Debussy's cultural milieu and the extra-musical associations in the subtitles of these compositions, "*General Lavine*" – *eccentric* and *Bruyères*, will be introduced to create the basis of my musical and interpretative investigation. With the formation of personal and sensorial experience as pertaining to

both non-musical and musical contents of these pieces, the transformation of my musical practice begins.

The description of my personal journey through the clown and caricature of “*General Lavine*” - *eccentric* and the portrait of nature in *Bruyères* integrates mental concept with musical application, which enhances my understanding of these two tonal sketches. From the angle of body-mind awareness, self-observation and reflection, my process of learning and preparing “*General Lavine*” - *eccentric* and *Bruyères* for performance shall also be scrutinized. These practical techniques of self-study have been cultivated during seven years of yoga study, a branch of somatic education, and became applicable for monitoring my physical and mental conditions, as well as increasing my adaptability to surprises and changes in performance situations.

The last section of this learning journey inspects the transformation of my performing and listening experience with “*General Lavine*” - *eccentric* and *Bruyères*. Analyses of three recordings of each Prélude from my past recitals will be made to examine the modifications in my musical renderings between 2009 and 2012, as well as how my attitude and perception in listening have consequently changed. For each work, one recording by another artist will then be discussed to reflect my new state of receptivity in listening to other artists and comprehending their interpretations.

This paper is written with the sole intention of studying and gleaning an understanding of my personal experience. General statements of objective value are neither intended nor implied in its content.

**Exploring the Context of Debussy and His Piano Préludes, “*General Lavine*” –
eccentric and *Bruyères***

Articles Published in 2015

The composer. Entering the historical and personal spheres of Claude Debussy was the first step that I took to prepare for the repertoire study of his 24 Préludes for piano. The biographies of Debussy by Edward Lockspeiser, François Lesure, and Jean-Michel Nectoux guided me inside the composer's life and delineated the inspirations that he drew from surrounding musical, literary, artistic, and cultural influences.

In the two volumes of *Debussy: His life and mind*, Lockspeiser (1962) examined “the hinterland of Debussy's world” (p. xvi) to re-create the historical, psychological, and cultural context of Debussy the musician and man. In *Claude Debussy: Biographie critique*, Lesure (2003) delved into Debussy's personal and professional correspondences to systematically reconstruct the composer's life and trace his creative development. In *Harmonie en bleu et or: Debussy, la musique et les arts*, Nectoux (2005) investigated Debussy's affinity for arts and the connections between his music and arts in the Symbolist era.

The accounts of Debussy's lifelong study of literature, his frequent social interactions with both performing and visual artists, his curiosity about the Far East, and his keen sense of aesthetics revealed an integration of diversified experiences and creative originality. In light of the extra-musical influences with which the composer was associated, I was motivated to explore different ways of hearing and comprehending Debussy's music.

His piano Préludes. Composed between 1909 and 1913, the 24 Préludes are miniature masterpieces that display Debussy's ability to evoke imagery with sound and integrate symbolism with music. Since their first publication in 1910 and 1913, these

oeuvres not only attracted the attention of amateur and professional musicians, but also inspired innumerable research volumes. Amongst these authors were Debussy's contemporaries, Marguerite Long, Alfred Cortot, and Élie Robert Schmitz, as well as 21st century musicologists, Siglind Bruhn, Roy Howat, and Paul Roberts. According to Long (1960), the enigmatic subtitles to these compositions were added as afterthoughts by the composer, which suggested his desire to let music speak first to the imagination of listeners before giving indication of its non-musical inspiration.

These 24 Préludes with evocative captions can be arranged into 8 categories: foreign places, illustrations of fairyland by Arthur Rackham, clowns and caricatures, portraits of nature, antiquity and enigma, poetry, musical arabesque, and legend and national festivities. The two Préludes chosen for the purpose of this article, "*General Lavine*" – *eccentric* and *Bruyères*, come from the categories of clowns and caricatures and portraits of nature, respectively.

"General Lavine" – eccentric: clowns and caricatures. In this Prélude, Debussy revived the spirit of American comic troupes, which toured Europe and became the new fashion in the music-hall entertainment of the early 1900s. In their studies, Bruhn (1997) and Roberts (2001) both refer to Schmitz's description of Edward Lavine, one of the most famous American comedians in the international vaudeville.

In 1910, General Lavine's performance at the Marigny Theatre in Paris included, "impersonations of a wooden puppet, tightrope walking, playing the piano with his toes, fighting a duel with himself, etc." (Bruhn, 1997, p. 118). In a coaching session with

Debussy, Long (1960) recalled the composer's comment about General Lavine and the acrobatic musical figure at the opening of this Prélude, "He was wooden" (p. 112)!

Bruyères: portraits of nature. Whether it was air, water, or greenery in the changing seasons, Debussy was able to wield these elemental forces with his imagination and create evocative compositions. In the existing research literature, concrete explanations for Debussy's tableaux of nature and imagination are scarce. However, in the recollection of Long (1960), Debussy remarked that *Bruyères* enabled him to, "smell the sea and the Celtic bushes that flourish under the great pine trees" (p. 111).

In Debussy's writings, the inexplicable relation between "the infinite soul of nature and that of an individual" (Debussy, 1987, p. 84) was a recurrent theme for aesthetic contemplation. In an article of 1903, Debussy (1987) voiced his opinion about the eloquence of music, "Music is a mysterious mathematics whose elements bear a resemblance to the Infinity. It is responsible for the movements of water, the playful meanderings of the changing winds; nothing is more musical than a sunset" (p. 176). In another article from the same year, Debussy (1987) described the role that music plays in the world of imagination and creativity as the followings, "In fact, music alone has the power to evoke to its liking the improbable places, the indubitable and chimerical world which shapes the mysterious poetry of night-time, the countless anonymous sounds that come from the leaves caressed by moonbeams" (p. 84).

Debussy's thoughts on these topics gave no direct answers to the precise meanings of his mysterious subtitles, but indirectly invited readers, listeners, and musicians to use their imagination and create their unique musical experience.

**Acquiring Personal Knowledge: Internalizing the Extra-Musical Associations in
“General Lavine” – eccentric and Bruyères**

While studying the musical text of these Préludes, investigating their non-musical subtitles took me on a parallel journey to explore the world that fascinated and stimulated Debussy. What I came across in arts, history, and nature became part of my sensory experience and entered my memory storage, which came alive at the sound of the music.

Through the lens of clowns and caricatures: “General Lavine” – eccentric.

When I watch clowns and ludicrous shows, it always brings up mixed feelings. Under the masks of ridicule and exaggeration, references to common personality traits and real-life situations can constantly be found. From Pierrot and Harlequin in the Italian *commedia dell’arte*, blackface in the American minstrel shows, to Eulenspiegel in Richard Strauss’ tone poem, *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* (Till Eulenspiegel’s merry pranks) (Celibidache, 2007), the portraits of these stereotypes and their clashes with various circumstances are always striking.

In Figure 1, General Lavine makes a dramatic entrance with acrobatic turns in 32nd-note ornamentation around middle C, dominant of F major. When C resolves into tonic of F major in Figure 2, a *pianissimo* cakewalk, marked *Spirituel et discret*, begins. I can imagine General Lavine discreetly exploring his surroundings, being startled by the *sforzato forte* chords in measures 17 and 18 (Debussy, 2007, p. 90), and playfully resuming his dance.



Figure 1 Measures 1 to 3: General Lavine's entrance (Debussy, 2007, p. 89).

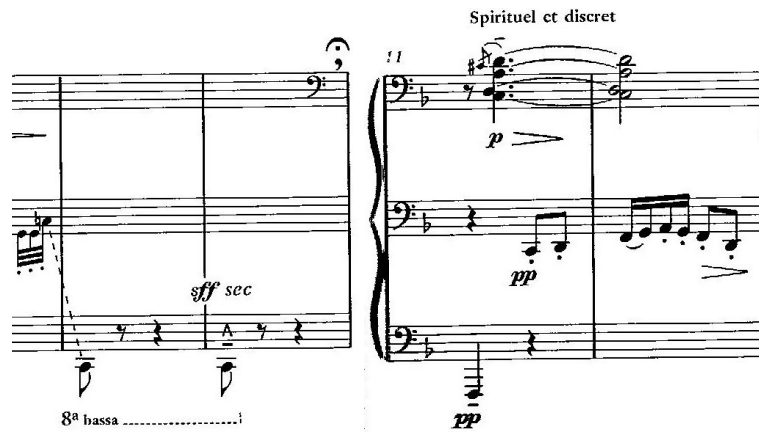


Figure 2 Measures 9 to 12: a cadence to start the cakewalk (Debussy, 2007, p. 89).



Figure 3 Measures 31 to 35: loud exclamations and a surprise (Debussy, 2007, p. 90).

In Figure 3, when General Lavine's strut takes a turn, crescendos, and lands with exclamation of *forte* chords, it is followed by a smiling surprise in *piano* and relaxes back to the F tonal centre with a sigh of relief. In the middle section of Figure 4, General

Lavine digresses from F major and takes a wrong turn to A-flat, dominant of D-flat major. After wandering about in puzzlement, he finds a way back to F major in measures 68 and 69 (Debussy, 2007, p. 93). The mannerist characterization of General Lavine draws me into his microcosm, where I become immersed in his story and momentarily, forget myself as a spectator.



Figure 4 Measures 43 to 48: a wrong turn (Debussy, 2007, pp. 91-92).

Portraits of nature through the mind's eye: *Bruyères*. To my ears, this *Prélude*, whose caption can be translated into either heather or moorland, represents a musical vignette of changing seasons and solitary contemplation. When I look at images of heather bush, I see nature in soft bloom. While I was learning *Bruyères*, I had to search inwards for my past impressions of nature and reach out with my senses in real time experience. What I saw, heard, smelled, and felt in my outdoor excursions

became an integral part of my musical comprehension and interpretation of this composition.



Figure 5 Measures 1 to 5: dominant 13th chord of the 1st cadence (Debussy, 2007, p. 84)

In Figure 5, the opening phrase of *Bruyères* can be traced to two chords, dominant 13th and tonic of A-flat major. Debussy's use of 7th, 9th, 11th, and 13th chords, which envelope and blend into one another, facilitates the general harmonic progression in this piece. From the A-flat major outer sections to the B-flat major middle section of *Un peu animé* and *joyeux* in Figure 6, the modulation travels seamlessly through an expanded A-flat chord, which can be tonic 11th of A-flat major with lowered 7th, or dominant 11th of D-flat major, or lowered subtonic 11th of B-flat minor. Its resolution on the tonic of B-flat major is a surprise, but not completely without preparation. Using subtraction, this A-flat chord makes its first appearance in measure 6 as G-flat major triad, lowered subtonic of A-flat major (Debussy, 2007, p. 84). Using addition, the same chord

transforms into dominant 11th with lowered 9th of B-flat major in measures 36 and 37 and returns to the final A-flat major section of “*au Mouvement*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 87).

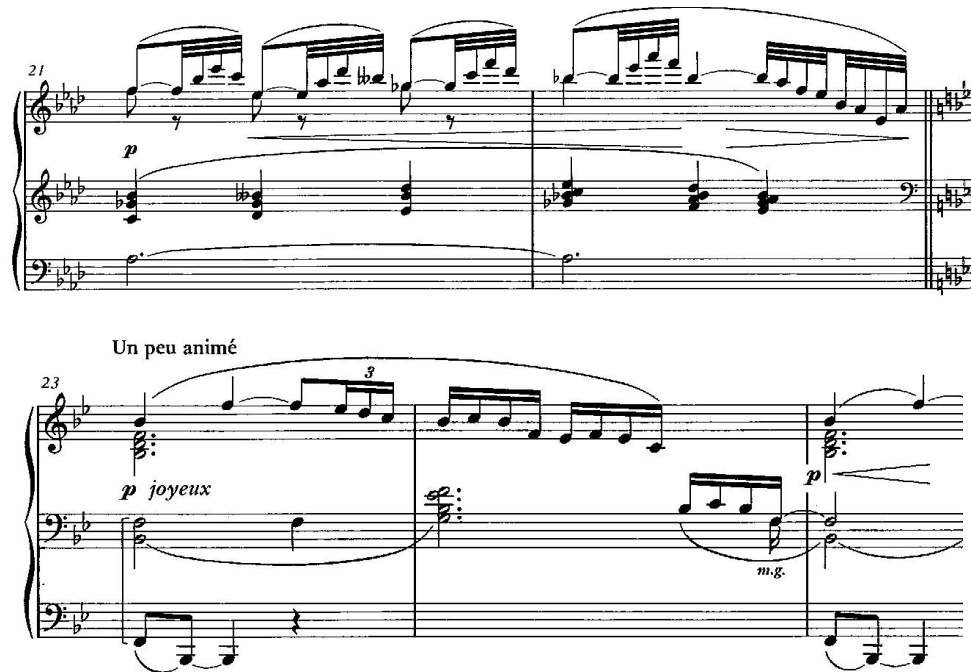


Figure 6 Measures 21 to 25: pivoting on an expanded A-flat chord (Debussy, 2007, p. 86).

The fluidity with which Debussy navigates the tonal transitions creates a feeling of open space, glowing serenity, as well as an atmosphere of “*Calme Doucement expressif*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 84). While I hear and think of *Bruyères*, I recall the experience of walking outside on early spring days. To hear birds chirping, to see evergreen shrubs reaching towards sunlight, and to smell spring in the warm air brings peace and joy to my heart. While the senses perceive changing seasons, the mind observes eternity, which resides in every corner and every moment of life.

Transformation in Progress: Externalizing the Somatic Tool of Body-Mind

Awareness in Musical Practice

Articles Published in 2015

After six years of intensive hatha yoga practice, one of the somatic disciplines, my range of body mobility, kinesthetic sense, and thinking habits have changed. Through stretching and strengthening exercises in yoga posture flows, my musculoskeletal balance and circulatory system grew better. The breathing exercises in Pranayama helped me to develop body awareness and relaxation skills. During the process of releasing muscular tension and acquiring control of respiration, I learned to expand my sensory experience, gain introspection, and raise my tolerance level. This section shall examine how the tool of body-mind awareness, which I learned from yoga, has helped improving several aspects of my musical study and performance preparation of “*General Lavine*” - *eccentric* and *Bruyères*.

Clowns and caricatures – caprice and astonishment. In Debussy’s musical characterization of *General Lavine - eccentric*, Edward Lavine the comic acrobat comes to life. For me, his sudden somersaults, awkward movement, capricious mood swings, and quirky humour presented immediate challenges to realizing a musical interpretation. Further than being confounded, I found the caprice in General Lavine’s funny sketches tricky to manage in musical renderings.

When I saw the instantaneous switches in the dynamics, my haste in complying with the *subito piano*, *sforzando forte in piano*, and *forte* markings often resulted in overlooking the gradation of dynamic sonority. When *forte* was indicated, I frequently landed on *fortissimo*. When I was listening and following some peculiar deviations in the harmonic progression, I often lost track of the rhythmic impulse. When I was not prepared for the abrupt changes in the music, they took me by surprise. On a parallel plane, I observed my physical movement while playing the passages of sudden shifts in

this Prélude. I could feel the exertion in my arm muscles when attempting to create contrasting effects in my performances. My eagerness to comply with Debussy's indications translated into excessive muscular effort, which resulted soon in physical fatigue.

During my piano lessons, my teacher, Marietta Orlov, and I investigated how the rhythmic unit of 8th notes could structurally stabilize the divergent musical effects amid a general state of flux. Such musical problems requested a renewal of General Lavine's portrayal in my imagination. How did he impersonate a wooden puppet to leave Debussy with such a vivid musical impression of rigidity? Returning to Debussy's score as seen in Figure 7, the 8th-note triads with markings of dry staccato at the beginning began to acquire a rhythmic angularity in my visual and sound imagination.



Figure 7 Measures 1 to 3: the 8th-note chords with dry staccato (Debussy, 2007, p. 89).

During the transition from a silent suspension with a fermata and trailing triads to an unexpected tonality of five-flat key signature in Figure 8, the quality of stiffness in the rhythmic unit of 8th notes helped me to employ the full duration of each 8th-note length for creating the effect of sudden changes.



Figure 8 Measures 43 to 48: the transition from rhythmic angularity to silence and a surprise (Debussy, 2007, pp. 91-92).

Becoming aware of the structural value in the 8th-note unit changed my physical movement between the sharp attacks of the wooden sounds in this musical comedy. I could produce the tone quality of angularity and stiffness with the speed of my pianistic attack, thus leaving the larger muscles of my arms agile and available to go swiftly from one spot to another in these comical skits. By finding a suitable point in my playing mechanism to engage and keeping the other body parts neutral, my physical coordination was enhanced. It helped me to create a more effective musical caricature.

The clarification of General Lavine's stage image gave me an access to comprehend Debussy's composition and shape the dramatic timing in this Prélude. When the extra-musical associations of this musical comedy became internalized, the musical components acquired a different expressive meaning to reinforce my

understanding and enhanced my concentration during the performances of *General Lavine - eccentric*.

Portraits of nature – seeking a focal point in my musical experience.

Bruyères has been one of the more accessible Préludes in my study and performance experiences. From a musical viewpoint, hearing the expressive quality of the music, the subtle shifts in the harmonic nuances, the fluidity in the harmonic rhythm and melodic lilt has always delighted me. From a somatic viewpoint, I noticed a calmer state in the body and a readiness of the mind to enter a musical experience of *Bruyères*.

From my experience of this composition, what created favourable performance conditions? Did a musical experience of mental ease and physical comfort originate in my personal preference? On what did I focus my attention to immerse myself in the music during the past performances of *Bruyères*? What did I hear and follow? What united the various musical elements in my listening and playing experience?

From my yoga practice, the awareness of my body-mind condition has become more acute, which enabled me to reflect on my musical experience. However, the introspection and relaxation techniques were only the beginning of gaining an understanding of why a particular musical experience was satisfying. What happens in my mental state and physical condition, as well as how I can consciously enter other moments of musical gratification, is the focus of my interest and curiosity.

From the first readings of *Bruyères*, I had the impression that musically and technically, this piece was within my capabilities. Unobstructed by immediately recognizable difficulties, I was free to start learning this Prélude without worry. As I became more familiar with the music, I found myself looking for more ways to hear the

changing tonal colours during the chord connections. For instance, Figure 9 shows the sustained tone of E-flat throughout the phrase ending of *piano* and *più piano* and extending into the 2-bar transition in 3/4 time signature. This E-flat sonority connects the successive chords together in my tonal imagination and gives me an opportunity to create a longer phrase with different shades of harmonic colours. Listening for the ubiquitous reverberation between the sounds became an integral part of my musical focus in *Bruyères*. Hearing how harmoniously the chords, melodies, and rhythms blend with one another widened my musical imagination. It also provided a doorway to finding a richer palette of tonal nuances for my playing.

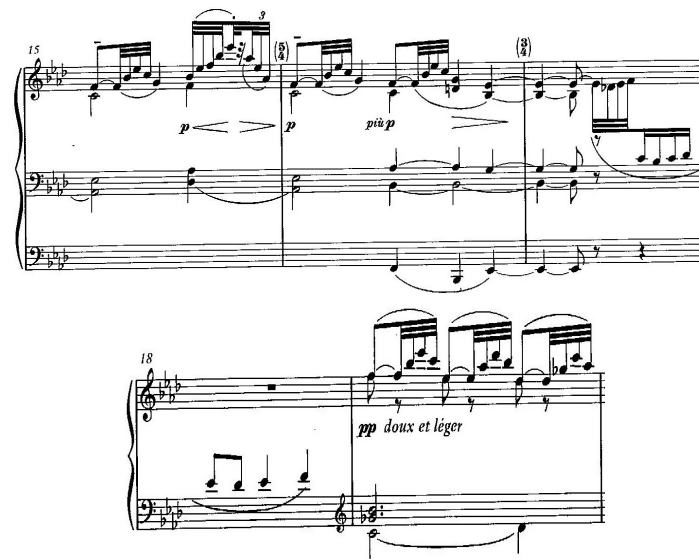


Figure 9 Measures 15 to 19: the suggestive E-flat resonance (Debussy, 2007, p. 85).

This process of exploring the usage of musical elements for interpretation brought me to find inspiration and spontaneity during my performances of this Prélude. The freedom from any mental and physical concern was a central physiological and psychological feature of this learning experience. The absence of fear allowed me to fully concentrate on the musical elements, form a sound image of their tonal effect, and

enjoy the musical execution. This insight was of benefit for other repertoire that I was studying.

When I detected my fear in other pieces, this observation helped me to not react instinctively. First, I began by locating where my fear originated. Surveying my mental and physical states, I brought my awareness to where the body parts were over-contracting and what was preoccupying my mind. Seeing the correspondent musical happenings, I could then select a musical problem to solve in such condition of physical tension and mental concern. Taking my time to attentively listen, apply, and work on the musical components in such learning situations helped to find my way into the music.

New Principles Learned from Listening and Analyses of Performance

Recordings: “*General Lavine*” – *eccentric* and *Bruyères*

In this section, Debussy *Préludes* recordings of my recitals and other artists will be utilized. My live performance recordings were collected from two recitals in Toronto in May and October, 2009 and one in Bologna, Italy, in 2012. To observe my listening experience of other artists’ interpretations of “*General Lavine*” – *eccentric* and *Bruyères*, recordings by Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli and Monique Haas, respectively, were consulted.

Listening to myself – expectation, surprise, and realization. For the purpose of this self-study, I had the opportunity of listening to my recital recordings, an activity which I have rarely undertaken with willingness. Watching this habitual reaction of shunning my performance records, I recognized my fear of disappointment. Each performance occasion is a reality check for me. Its transient attribute makes live concert an interactive and spontaneous artistic activity. With as much musical preparation as I can master, I may commence an execution with any aspiration or expectation, but I can only participate in the happenings of this temporal art form and follow its course of action. While I have learned to accept this aspect of the musical profession and shift my attention from reconceived thoughts to the actual performance, for me, the prospect of listening to digital recordings of past recitals is not a welcome thought. On stage, my performance practice has taught me to immerse myself in the music. Off stage, am I able to listen to myself without an immediate emotional reaction? Is my performance impression from a recital capable of affecting my listening experience of the same event afterwards? With all due concerns and doubts,

listening to my recital recordings of “*General Lavine*” – *eccentric* and *Bruyères* turned out to be an experience beyond my imagination.

When I bypassed the urge to make immediate comments about what sounded pleasing or disagreeable to my ears, I could hear and follow better the musical objectives and effects of each execution. For each *Prélude*, the musical transformation from one performance to another is noteworthy. Although I had the impression of having formed a musical conception of “*General Lavine*” – *eccentric* from the start, the precision of psychological timing is not clearly projected until the second round of recital recordings and thereafter. Contrariwise, what I remembered as glaring mishaps during recitals was not so evident in the recordings to disturb the musical expression and flow.

All in all, when I heard my performance recordings of these *Préludes*, it was a musical experience of solely listening. Setting aside the expectation of success or failure, as well as the reliance on my memory of any particular impression during recitals, these sound recordings brought me to hear these performances in new ways that exceeded my imagination. Listening without giving particular emphasis to what I would prefer or not prefer to hear, I became more ready to discern details, which may be of benefit to enlarging my interpretative choices later.

To differentiate one recital recording from another, the three recordings will be listed in chronological order and referred to by roman numerals I, II, and III.

“*General Lavine*” – *eccentric* (I May, 2009 II October, 2009 III September, 2012). On a performance level, all three recital recordings of this work demonstrate a good understanding of the composition and its style, solid pianistic preparation, and steady growth of musical imagination and humour from one performance to another.

Amongst them, the most noticeable modification is the psychological timing of quirky characterization and capricious turnabout.

Playing with agogics and timing. Although all three recital recordings of the same piece run approximately the same duration of two minutes and twenty-five seconds, the sense of pulse, psychological timing, and comic effect in Recordings II and III is noticeably different from Recording I.

In Figure 10, the opening acrobatic turns in *forte* alternate with 8th-note triads of the opposite dynamics and articulation. The stark contrast between accented and sustained middle C half notes and dry staccato 8th-note triads in *piano* is enough to make me smile. However, how the pulse is set for these two opening figurations makes a big difference in the effectiveness of clownery. In Recording I, the general pulse is one per bar, thus every half note. At this brisk pace, the Prélude sets off in a rather straightforward manner. Recordings II and III use the subdivision of 8th notes and play the *piano* triads with slightly more spacing between the dry staccatos, which sound deliberate and more mischievous.



Figure 10 Measures 1 to 4: different pulsations and effects. (Debussy, 2007, p. 89).

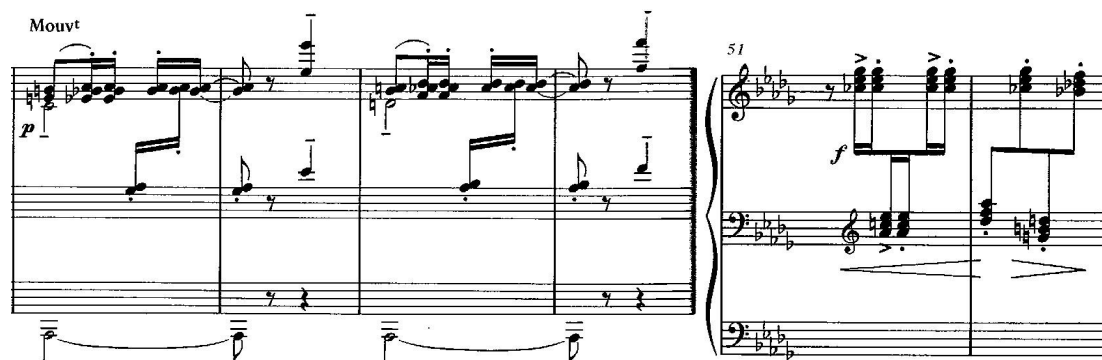


Figure 11 Measures 47 to 52: suspense and *subito forte* surprise (Debussy, 2007, p. 92).

In Figure 11, as General Lavine strays into dominant 7th of D-flat major and peeps cautiously around, the accented 16th-note triads in *forte* can be most startling to all ears. Recording I goes directly from the suspense in *piano* to the *forte* triads with a hurried air. In Recordings II and III, an audible and rhythmic breath is taken at the 8th rest to prepare for the sudden appearance of *subito forte*, which crackles with biting clarity.

In Figure 12, the middle section closes with melodramatic outbursts and another unexpected turn. Recording III uses agogic accents in the two *forte* bars to broaden and ascend to the *fortissimo* climax with the marking, *Très retenu*. The elastic timing during this theatrical moment creates an impression of grandeur. Then, the *tenuto* quarter-note triplet takes enough time to change its mind and resume the *pianissimo* cakewalk.



Figure 12 Measures 65 to 69: a theatrical moment (Debussy, 2007, p. 93).

Bruyères (I May, 2009 II October, 2009 III September, 2012). In all three recital recordings of this *Prélude*, I can hear a clear projection of the general harmonic structure, calmness and expressiveness in the atmosphere, and a well-defined overall musical texture. From one rendering to another, what I find pleasantly surprising is the different nuances that come forward from various musical layers.

Projecting different layers. In the musical texture of *Bruyères*, there are at least four layers in simultaneous tonal interaction. They support each other with resonance and move seamless through the chord progression. A similar harmonic conception is

perceptible in all three recordings, but each execution creates a different combination of chamber ensemble effects.

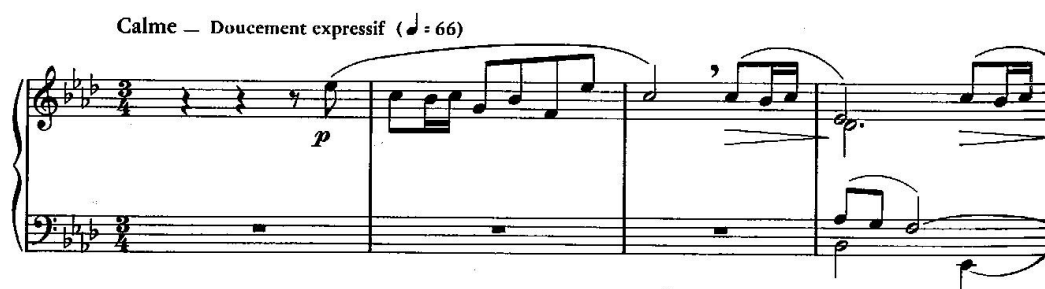


Figure 13 Measures 1 to 4: the texture of multiple layers (Debussy, 2007, p. 84).

In Figure 13, the opening solitary melody is joined by second violin, viola, and cello in bar 4. Recording I places the viola line in high relief, thus offering a response to the first violin's gentle sigh in diminuendo. In Figure 14, the range of registers widens as the modal progression arrives at the *mezzo forte* A-flat major sonority. Recording II pronounces the low A-flat tone and middle register line with warmth and clarity. The quality of sound in these harmonic layers supports the 16th-note descending line with a feeling of breath, mellowness, and flexibility. Also, having a deeper and fuller resonance on the low A-flat enriches the colour of the *mezzo forte* A flat major sonority. The rich vibration of this low A-flat is extended into the following bar, where the phrase utilizes the same A-flat major chord in *piano* to makes a turn to continue in another direction.

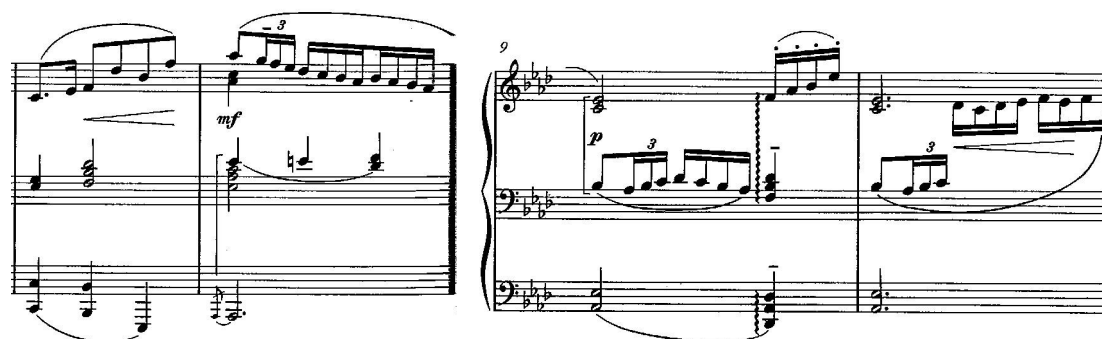


Figure 14 Measures 7 to 10: projecting tonal colours of different layers (Debussy, 2007, p. 84).

In Figure 15, the middle section of *Un peu animé* arrives. Recordings II and III highlight distinctive layers and create different nuances of joy. Recording II plays the bass and middle register layers with smiling cheerfulness. Projecting lines in these lower registers adds a soft radiance to the rich resonance. Recording III opens the middle section with a well-voiced top B-flat quarter note. This B-flat tone begins the phrase with a bright spring colour and a fresh breeze of a sunny morning. Inside the same harmonics, bringing out various shades of textural layers allows different expressions of the same sentiment to come forth in several performances.

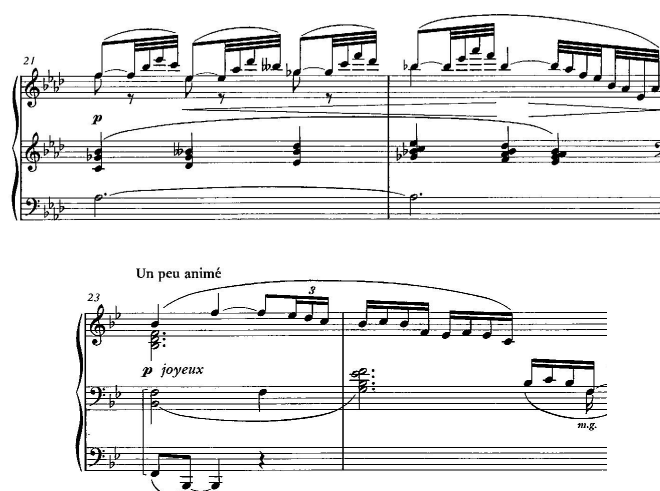


Figure 15 Measures 21 to 24: the entrance to the middle section (Debussy, 2007, p. 86).

Listening to other artists – how I can comprehend their musical imagery.

From my musical study with Lynda Metelsky, Germaine Mounier, Serge Blanc, and Marietta Orlov, I learned the skills of reading a musical score, inferring the composer's intentions, and constructing my own interpretation. This method taught me how to

consult a musical text as a primary source. When I listened to live concerts and sound recordings, I was used to refraining from hearing works that I happened to learn at that moment.

At an early stage of studying a piece, such intentional avoidance of listening to other artists' interpretations is what I continue to do to date. Before forming an initial understanding of an opus from the composer's text, listening to another artistic execution can be a confusing experience for me. Without the knowledge of a reliable score, I have little basis for comprehending another pianist's musical decisions. When an execution sounds agreeable or displeasing to my ears, is the formation of my opinion governed by my understanding of a composition, my comprehension of the performer's musicianship and interpretation, my appreciation of the overall presentation, or whims?

From the experience of listening to my own recital recordings, I recognized the variable and fluctuating nature of my impressions. Different performances of the same works were not alike. My ideas are not absolute. My experience can change.

With such thoughts in mind, I shall report my listening experience of "*General Lavine*" – *eccentric* and *Bruyères* by Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli and Monique Haas, respectively. The purpose of these brief analyses is not to enumerate my personal preferences. Instead, I would like to examine what I can comprehend in these artists' performances, how their musical decisions are related to the compositional structure, and the effects achieved by such choices.

"General Lavine" – eccentric (Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli). With a rich palette of orchestral timbres and harmonic nuances, as well as an incredible variety of tones and pianistic articulations, Benedetti Michelangeli (1998) creates a fantastic

portrait of General Lavine on stage. His performance strictly observes Debussy's score and indications. His choices of tempi and dynamics are sober and refined.

In Figure 16, the first surprise of General Lavine's dancing excursion occurs. With the various *tenuto* markings in measures 15, 17, and 19, Benedetti Michelangeli highlights different details in his character sketch of General Lavine the comedian. Contrary to the score indication, the dry *sforzato forte* 8th-note attack in measure 18 is intentionally without arpeggio, which produces the droll impact of a thud. Together with the *sforzato forte* half note and another acrobatic turn around middle C quarter note in measure 17, this instance of buffoonery explodes with an extraordinary assortment of musical thumps.

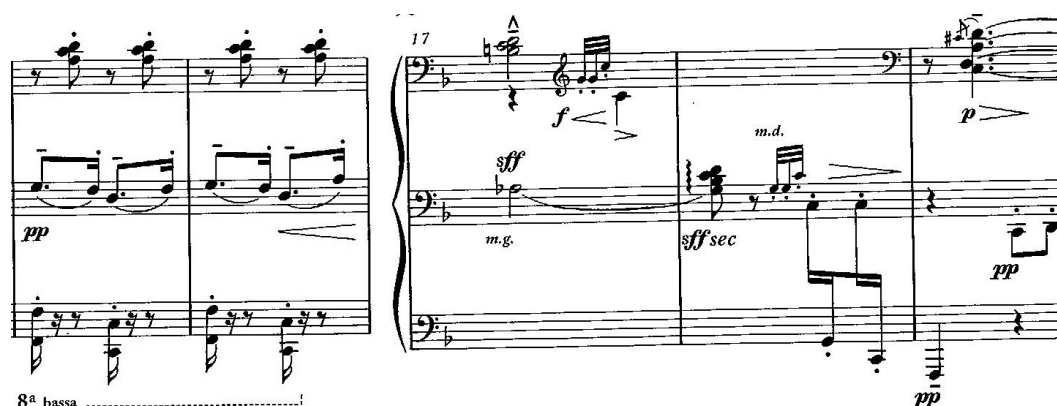


Figure 16 Measures 15 to 19: underlining various *tenuto* markings (Debussy, 2007, pp. 89-90).

Bruyères (Monique Haas). To my ears, the performance of Haas (1963) exemplifies the beauty and artistry of simplicity. Within a well-projected musical structure and texture, Haas brings off nuances of expression and tonal colours with an economy of dynamics and tempo alteration. Her observance of Debussy's notation and indications of articulations, dynamics, and tempi is scrupulous.

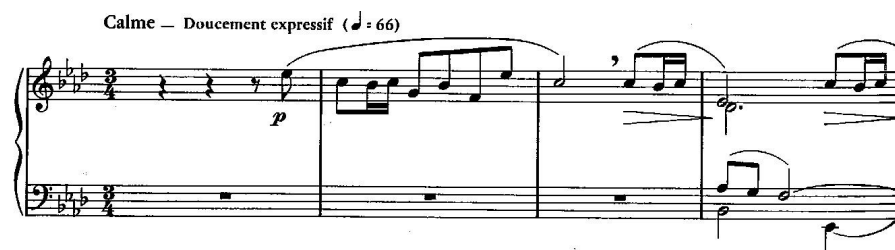


Figure 17 Measures 1 to 4: a rare moment of expressive

In Figure 17, she pronounces the opening melody with unaffected elegance. The following figure in diminuendo places a tiny agogic stress on the 8th-note treble C, thus shaping the descending major 6th from C to E flat into a gentle sigh. Such timing alteration is rare in this execution and creates a very special moment of expressiveness.

Reflection and Continuation: Learning, Listening, and Transforming

Going over my journals from the period of studying Debussy *Préludes*, I found an entry made right after my recital in May, 2008. It reads as follows:

These pieces transported me to a world of dreams, visions, life, and death. What I learned about each *Prélude* during my musical, intellectual, and experiential preparation helped the music to come alive in my imagination and materialize in sounds. I remember how vivid and palpable every note felt. I had the sensation of being alive. Listening to the connection between the sounds, which felt infinite, I experienced an expanded sense of time. The music took actual shapes in my imagination and emerged as sonic vibrations at the piano. Both in my musical imagination and performance execution, my preparation helped the musical inspirations to come forth and the tonal nuances to solidify in sounds. Listening to what I recalled as an exceptional musical experience did not evoke an

identical response six years later. It was a reminder of the transformative essence of my learning process. I could appreciate many artistic moments of musical rendering in this particular sound recording, but having the span of time and life between then and now enabled me to listen and examine the music with fresh ears, eyes, and mind.

After having lived my own practical experience of the Debussy Préludes, I heard how my musical decisions underwent small, but noticeable alterations from one recital to another. It reminded me of the organic nature of my musical development and personal growth. When my mind can grasp an intellectual concept with relative promptness, my body needs more time to learn a physical reflex. In my piano study, the changes through musical comprehension and extra-musical imagination took several years to manifest themselves in sound.

Examining all aspects as relevant to creating a performance has revealed a combination of studying the musical score, living the non-musical inspirations, and observing my body-mind state during the recital preparation. This musical and personal research transformed my way of reading a score, forming an interpretation, listening to music, and taking the time to live, learn, and observe my experience.

Taking the opportunity to document my transformational journey in both sound recordings and writing created a fresh understanding of such personal knowledge. It highlighted the changeable aspect of my past memory, current impression, and future experience. Keeping this realization in mind makes it available for application in other aspects of my musical and daily life.

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Music as a Gift: Personal Narrative

Gina Luongo

Abstract

This paper is a narrative exploring the therapeutic role music played in the life of a woman diagnosed with a rare cancer at the same age her own mother lost her life to cancer. Weaving memories of her childhood listening to music with her mother and present day memories of listening to songs with her own children, the author uncovers how music helped her build deeper and more meaningful connections with others. The author discovers music as a powerful tool in overcoming adversity and in healing.

Key Words

songs, coping, healing, recovery

Author Bio

Gina Luongo is a Special Education Consultant for the Peel District School Board. She holds a Master of Education degree in Holistic Education. She is the author of two published novels. One of her novels was written under a pseudonym (Gina Elle). It is titled *Your Song* and was published in 2013. The second novel, published in 2014 under her own name, is titled *Truth Is Beautiful*. She is in the process of writing an illness memoir and an anthology of short stories.

I have told many people this past year that cancer was not a gift but that it came bearing some. Wrapped inside those small gifts were some humbling life lessons. But images of achieving peacefulness or humility do not immediately come to mind when you picture yourself being diagnosed with cancer. Devastation and shock might instead. Terrifying fear too, perhaps. Or, in my experience, an eerie and shattering sense of déjà vu as the doctors spelled out for me that my particular cancer was a genetic and hereditary one. Years ago, my mother was diagnosed with a rare aggressive and terminal cancer at the exact same age as I was on the day I was receiving my news. She died from this wretched disease a year later. And there I was sitting in the doctor's office silently counting on my fingers how many months I may have had left to live.

Fifteen months have now passed. I'm sitting here tonight with my journal opened on my lap rereading more than a year's worth of entries that I've recorded since that day in the doctor's office. And as I start on the first page and read right up until my last entry from this morning, I realize that as I've been reading, I've been making a list. The list is entitled Tools. Without realizing it until tonight as I review this list, I've built myself a toolbox of survival resources that I've been accessing at different stages along my journey through cancer. Not surprising to me, listening to music was one of the top entries on the list.

Having cancer is an isolating experience no matter how many friends and family and well-wishers surround you. In the darkest moments nothing they said or did comforted me. One day, when I was feeling particularly down, I Googled "songs about despair", "songs that give you hope" or something to that effect. I compiled a short playlist and my technology-savvy young children helped me download and sync these

songs onto my iPhone. What is surprising to me tonight as I review the selection is that a few of these songs I had listened to with my mother when I was growing up. We'd be driving in the car, or listening to 45s on our stereo and it felt like time was standing still. Whether it was the beat, the rhythm, the lyrics or the mood, I remember the moments when it was just the two of us sharing time together over music. If I close my eyes right now I can almost replay the scene with my mother snapping her fingers to the Beatles' or thumping her hand on the steering wheel when an upbeat Neil Diamond song came on. And if I try really hard, I can almost hear the sound of her voice singing again. Like pressing rewind on an old tape deck, listening to some of these old songs during my recovery allowed me to go back in time and listen to the sounds of my youth: my mother's voice and happy songs. And doing this brought me comfort and peace. I felt her love. This experience, nostalgic and therapeutic, taught me how to push through the pain of disease and grief. The music that brought me comfort in my journey through disease was music I grew up listening to with my mother. It's as if these songs held me in their embrace as my mother would if she would have been here with me.

In June 2013 I underwent major surgery to remove a tumor that rested on the top of my left femur, the joint where leg meets hip. Surgeons cut off a third of my femur in order to resect the tumor and surrounding cancerous cells and replaced my missing femur with titanium prosthesis. Recovery, I was told, would take at least six to eight months but with the expectation that I would likely never walk, run or do any impact sports activities the same again. Hearing this as a runner and yoga enthusiast was like being handed a life sentence. But I wanted to live so I had no choice. And although the surgeon tried to warn me about the long and difficult recovery process ahead of me, when you have something

malignant growing inside you all you hear is that it can be removed, not how hard life will be afterwards.

And difficult it was. After four weeks of immobility, I got up onto my crutches one day and tucked my iPhone in my pocket and stepped outside. I wanted to get moving again. Our house is situated on a court so I decided to use the perimeter of the court as a rehab gauge. If I could walk half way around the perimeter everyday for a week, then maybe next week I could walk the entire course. So with ear buds in, sunglasses on, and hands perched on each crutch, I started on my road to recovery. And who came with me along for the ride? Artists like McCartney and Lennon singing “Let It Be” and “Imagine,” Kelly Clarkson belting out “Stronger (What Doesn’t Kill You),” Michael Jackson singing “You Are Not Alone,” and anything by Coldplay. The lyrics of these songs resonated with me in this time of profound physical and emotional struggle. It felt like the artists, singing closely in my ear, were singing to me and for me only. That they wrote and performed the song to help me, it seemed, telling me not to give up, that I could get through this. More upbeat tracks by Taylor Swift, Bruno Mars, or my favorite at the time, Capital Cities’ “Safe and Sound” filled me with hope and comfort. Each day, music made me feel less alone and a little more positive. Music spoke to me in a language that was foreign to my loved ones and my favorite authors. Music held me where I needed to be held.

A few months into my recovery, my surgeon introduced me to a young woman who went through a similar surgery as mine three years earlier. Finally, I had found someone to hold my hand as I navigated my way along the road to walking again but this woman happened to live five hours away. So we began an email relationship. A few steps

ahead of me in her journey, I turned to this woman when I had questions or needed to vent. She was both a sounding board and a sign of hope for me. One day our conversation over email was about ways we coped through the toughest times. This is what she wrote:

Music was a great coping mechanism for me. I listened to a lot of dance and hip/hop upbeat type of music because I found it kept my moods high. My favorite song when I was going through all this was “Airplanes” by B.O.B. One lyric was “can we pretend that airplanes in the night sky are like shooting stars? I can really use a wish right now.” I sang that same part of the song A LOT. It brought comfort. I’m not sure why.

I remember being at my physiotherapist’s appointment a few months into my recovery and feeling especially lethargic that day. Sensing my sadness, she brought over her iPod and played one of her favorite songs by Mumford & Sons. I lied there listening to the song and the recurring lyric that went “I will wait, I will wait for you”. At the time, I didn’t appreciate the depth of the lyric as much as I do today. Deep in the trenches of my sadness I’d often cry and my physiotherapist would assure me that I would walk again one day but that it would take time and that she’d be there waiting, like the lyric said. And she has been. I am walking again, limp and all, but I am walking.

I reflect on the role music played in my relationship with both of these women. I appreciate now that for each of them music helped them to help me. And the fact they wanted to truly support me and give me hope deepened my connection to them. It was like my pain and their concern had coincided.

Around the eight-month stage in my recovery, I began to fall into a deep depression. Instead of life getting easier as I became more mobile, I began to feel paralyzed in many ways. Exhausted from the uphill battle, weary from all the worry about the cancer possibly returning, unable to see the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel, I hit close to rock bottom. Then one rainy day driving in the car with my

children, a lyric from the Katy Perry song called “This Moment” was playing on the CD player and it spoke louder to me than the thunder hollering in the sky. She sang for me a truth that brought me the comfort I was seeking at that time.

All we have is this moment
Tomorrow is unspoken
Yesterday is history

This moment. All we really have is this moment. The past year has been a series of moments; cancer has been a progression of trying moments; there have been times that have been joyful while others have been devastating. They’re just moments and they’re fleeting, both the good ones and the bad, I thought. And that is when inspiration struck. I would write about my moments. I would share my cancer story with others within the framework of random moments in my journey. Moments such as receiving the diagnosis, experiencing what it felt like the first time walking with a limp, describing a weepiness that I couldn’t shake. So soon after I began to write reflections around moments I had experienced this past year and somewhere in the body of every paper I used the phrase “in this moment” to bind these reflections together. Music, in this case, served as a springboard for further healing.

Today I often find myself singing this Katy Perry lyric over and over in my head like a mantra or a prayer. The lyric offers me a meditative moment similar to a pause in my day. It breaks down the old cliché ‘one day at a time’ within a more tangible reach for me. All we have is *this* moment. I can do this moment. And the more I think about it, I realize that this lyric, as powerful as it has been for me, would not nearly have as much impact as it does without the music accompanying it. When I sing the words to myself I hear the instruments in my head and I feel the beat take residence in my body. I usually

sway one of my hands to the rhythm of the song or tap my foot to the beat or often hum. The chorus of this song speaks to me on a physical, emotional, and spiritual level.

If music served as a surrogate mother for me in the early days of post-surgery it also helped me to express the love that I was feeling towards my own children at that time. The timing of the release of the single “Unconditionally” coincided with my release from a five-day hospital stay in which time I hadn’t seen my children. How I had missed them and felt like I had failed them as a mother being away from their lives. For a while, the disease had whisked me off to another land devoid of laughter and interaction. I was living a mother’s nightmare fearing that they were going to lose me as I had lost my own mother. And so the first time I had heard Katy Perry singing “Unconditionally” I thought of my two young daughters. How I wanted them to know that I loved them unconditionally. The next time the song played on the radio while we were all listening, I told them that this song made me think of them and how I loved each of them unconditionally. I remember singing it at the top of my lungs. They knew it was one of my favorite songs from that summer because it described how I felt about them. My hope is that whenever they hear this song they will think of me and will remember me telling them how I loved them unconditionally. This song was a gift I wanted to give them.

This paper cannot come to a close without my acknowledging the connection between sharing music with my mother as a young child and sharing music with my children. I’ve learned that the music we share with others binds us to each other. Music ties us to memories. Memories connect us to our childhood and to the love between a mother and her children. Just as I can picture the scene where my mother and I are driving along listening to upbeat songs and I’m feeling happy and safe and loved, I hope

my own children will have similar memories of doing the same with me. They are as loved and adored as I was. For me, music has been the connective tissue linking me to the love and concern of those in my midst; my physiotherapist and email friend being two.

In my times of adversity, music has delivered messages of hope, truth, and comfort to me and I suspect it does the same for others. At some of the darkest and loneliest moments along my journey this past year, music provided me with a refuge, an inspiration and it brought me closer to both my mother's memory and my daughters' future memories. It was the only tool in my toolbox that did all three.

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Two Compositions for a Shabbat Service: “Adonai S’Fatai” and “Misheberach”

Carol Shansky

Abstract

“Adonai s’fatai” implores G-d to enable prayer in a Shabbat service. The melody is deliberately simple and “chant-like” in order to for it to be easily learned and improvised on; repetition brings the person singing to an elevated state open to prayer. “Misheberach” is sung in front of the open Torah to implore G-d for assistance with healing. This composition is somewhat more difficult with a melody that is more expansive as compared to the chant. The accompaniment of the flute and piano complement the vocal line.

Key Words

composition, prayers, Shabbat, reform tradition

Composer Bio

Dr. Carol Shansky is Assistant Professor of Music at Iona College where she is Director of the Music Program. She earned her Doctor of Musical Arts (Music Education) and Master of Music (Performance) from Boston University and her Bachelor of Music (Music Education) from Ithaca College. Dr. Shansky is a contributor to the Journal of Research in Musicology, *Alta Musica*, *Flute Talk*, and *RIME* (USA, online) and has presented papers at the St. Augustine Symposium on the History of Music Education, CMS-NE Regional Conferences, East Coast Band Conference, IGEB Conference, the Adult and Lifelong Learning Symposium, the Spirituality and Music Education Symposium and the North American British Music Studies Association Conference. She serves on the editorial board of the Journal of Research in Music Performance, the Pedagogy Committee of the New Jersey Flute Society and is director of and flutist with Bergen Chamber Artists. In addition, Dr. Shansky is an active performer in the New York City area, performing in several orchestras and as chamber musician and solo recitalist. Her music appreciation textbook: “Musical Tapestries: A Thematic Approach to Music Appreciation” (released in June 2012) by Kendall-Hunt publishers is in its 2nd edition.

These two prayers were set to music for a Shabbat service at Temple Emeth, a Reform Jewish synagogue in Teaneck, NJ. The service took place in March, 2014. Unlike Orthodox and many Conservative synagogues, group singing including instruments is common in the Reform tradition. This must be kept under consideration in composing for this environment. For their music service, Temple Emeth uses a band made up of members of the synagogue that volunteer to play. The instrumentation is flute, violin, saxophone, melodica, guitars, bass and piano in addition to the Cantor.

Instrumental music by way of organ playing has been practiced in Reform synagogues since its inception in 1810 in Seesen, Germany. According to Rubin and Baron an organ was used at the dedication ceremony and its continued use is noted along with its introduction to American Reform services in 1838 (Rubin and Baron, 2006, pg. 239-240). Guitar was introduced as the Jewish camp movement revved up in the 1970s (Friedmann, 2008, pg. 14) and Baron and Rubin note a number of works composed for the Sabbath service that use a variety of orchestral instruments and even electric bass (pg. 261). The addition of various instruments to the Reform service more recently is largely due to the success of the “Friday Night Live” services at Sinai Temple in Los Angeles in 1998. What started as an idea to bring in younger worshippers became a nationwide phenomenon of Shabbat services with “hip” titles such as “Rock Shabbat.” It was in this spirit that Temple Emeth instituted its “Music Service” (music meant to underscore the use of instruments as singing is always a component) and continues to this time.

It should be noted that while Orthodox and Conservative worship traditions are commonly individual while traditional Reform follows a Protestant practice of group prayer. Recent practice in synagogues has found congregants exploring a more individual

and personal approach in an effort to heighten the spiritual experience. Worship practice remains a group activity, but singing the prayers together has become the means of personal connection. This is particularly important for the “Adonai s’fatai” prayer.

The “Adonai s’fatai” prayer is the introductory supplication for the “Amidah,” the central moment in the Shabbat service where worshippers praise, petition and thank G-d. The words of “Adonai s’fatai” implore G-d to enable the prayers that the worshipper is about to recite. One translation is: “Eternal G-d, open my lips, that my mouth may declare your glory.” The intensity of the moment is underscored as both “Adonai s’fatai” and the “Amidah” are chanted standing. In setting these words to music, I was mindful of both the weight of the moment as well as the brevity of the prayer. The melody is deliberately simple and “chant-like” in order to for it to be more easily learned as well as pull the listener away from a musical performance and toward the power of music to enable prayer. As a chant, the melody does not have a wide range and there are a minimal number of intervals larger than a second. It is necessarily brief and repetition brings the person singing to an elevated state open to prayer. At the same time, the simplicity of the melody allows for improvisation on the part of the instrumentalists and Cantor as the congregation repeats the melody any number of times. It should be noticed that there is no prohibition against repeat of the words for this particular prayer. It is common at Temple Emeth for “Adonai s’fatai” to be repeated many times until the Cantor feels that the worshippers have been brought to a point of satisfaction and readiness to continue.

The “Misheberach” prayer is read, in the Reform service, just after the reading of the Torah and before it is returned to the Ark. As the Torah is exposed, it is a holy and

prayerful moment to implore G-d for assistance with the health needs of a loved one. It is a prayer for healing which has a special place in Reform worship. It is in contrast to “Adonai s’fatai” as it is intended for the energy of the group’s prayer to appeal to G-d for assistance in healing. As the Reform tradition is built on group prayer the opportunity to enlist the spiritual intensity of the congregation is particularly meaningful. A list of those in need of a healing prayer (illness in this context is expanded to include physical and mental) is read as well as congregants providing additions verbally. “Misheberach” is sung by all no matter if an individual has a person on the list or not; the group prays for healing together. The music composed here is created for personal meditation and to listen as the Cantor sings, but not so difficult as to not be able to be learned over time. As such the melody is somewhat expansive and expressive as compared to a chant. It requires some practice for the wider range and more intricate rhythm. The accompaniment by the flute and piano complement the vocal line and move the piece forward. The lyrics are a combination of Hebrew and English. As many of those who worship at a Reform synagogue are not versed in the meaning of Hebrew words, given the very personal meaning behind this prayer, the use of English has a more direct impact.

In both compositions, the intent was not to create a virtuoso work for a solo instrumentalist or voice. In fact, they were written with the amateur musician in mind, those who volunteer their time at their synagogue and play for the love of it, but may lack the skills needed for advanced repertoire. The vocal parts could easily be learned by a lay song-leader and the piano and instrumental parts are approachable as well.

These compositions are an example of the ways in which music can inspire or enhance a spiritual experience. The experience in this case is both for the congregation receiving the music and the musicians themselves as the performance of music in a religious context can be particularly uplifting for the person making the music.

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Adonai s'fatai

Score

1x = Cantor, flute & bass only; 2x add violin & guitar; 3x add sax & melodica

Fm B^bm/F Fm B^bm/F Fm B^bm/F

Flute

A do nai A do__ nai s fa tai tif tach A do

Violin

Soprano Sax.

Oboe

Fm Fm D^b Fm B^bm C Fm/D^b Fm

Fl.

nai u fi ya gid t hi la__ te cha A do nai A do nai.

Vln.

S. Sax.

Ob.

Adonai, open my lips,
that my mouth may declare Your praise

Source: *Mishkan Tfilah: A Reform Siddur*. New York: CCAR Press, 2007

Bless those in need of healing with *r'fuah sh'leimah*, the renewal of body, the renewal of spirit, and let us say, Amen.

2

13

Bring us strength and bring us blessings Re-new our bod-ies mind and spi - rit.

Fl.

Pno.

17

r' fu a shlei mah min ha sha may - im r' fu at ha ne fesh ur-fu at ha

Fl.

Pno.

21

guf A men.

Fl.

Pno.

Songs And Action: Self-Determination And Embracing Our Will

Carlo Ricci

Abstract

This paper will explore the role of music, the concepts of self-determination, the willed curriculum, and a course I created and teach at the graduate level entitled Educational Representations in Popular Culture. Specifically, this paper will explore the lyrics to two songs (Flowers are Red by released by Harry Chapin 1978 and The Logical Song released by Supertramp in 1979), and how these two songs speak to us about schooling, teaching, learning, education, and freedom. The major premise underlying this paper is that music is an important and invaluable part of being able to understand and make sense of the world around us. In sum, music is a tool to challenge the status quo, make social commentary, change the world, and make the world a better place.

Key Words

popular songs, unschooling, self-determination, willed curriculum

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Carlo Ricci is a full Professor at the Schulich School of Education, Nipissing University, Graduate Studies. He founded and edits the *Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning (JUAL)*. He has published a number of books and articles. Among the books he has written and edited are, *The Willed Curriculum, Unschooling, and Self-Direction: What Do Love, Trust, Respect, Care, and Compassion Have To Do With Learning?* (2012); *The Legacy of John Holt: A Man Who Genuinely Understood, Trusted, and Respected Children* (co-edited with Pat Farenga) (2013); *Turning Points: 35 Educational Visionaries in Education Tell Their Own Stories* (co-edited with Jerry Mintz) (2010); *Natural Born Learners: Unschooling and Autonomy in Education* (co-edited with Beatrice Ekwa Ekoko (2014)); *Holistic Pedagogy: The Self and Quality Willed Learning* (Springer Press 2015) (co-authored with Conrad Pritscher). He currently has two books in press: One is titled *Holistic Pedagogy: The Self and Quality Willed Learning* which he coauthored with Conrad Pritscher and is being published by Springer. The other is titled *Homeschooling in Full View: A Reader* (2nd ed.), which he co-edited with Bruce Cooper, & Frances Spielhagen and is being published by Information Age Publishing Inc. His research interests include Unschooling; Homeschooling; Holistic Education; Self-determined Learning; Free Schools; Democratic Schools; Online Learning; Technology and Learning; Play; Natural Learning; Curiosity; Willed Learning; and the Willed Curriculum.

Timeflies. I am writing “time flies” without a space in between the words to try and truly convey the speed with which my life appears to be moving. As a child my parents and other older people would sit around and preach to me how the older you get the faster the years go by. I was not able to understand what they meant. After all, it would take forever for my birthday and other calendar events that I would be eagerly anticipating to come around.

I get it now. It has been 13 years since I have been working at my current job. I started teaching at Nipissing University in 2002. When I first started I felt that there was a need for certain courses to be offered that were not currently available for students to take. Fortunately, there is a process in place that allows professors the opportunity to propose new courses. Over the years, I proposed five graduate courses that were accepted and have become part of the regular rotation for course offerings. In fact, these courses often have a waitlist of students who are itching to register for them. Specifically, these courses address holistic education, democratic education, critical pedagogy, alternative education, and educational representation in popular culture. These courses allow me the opportunity to interact with people in areas that I am interested in, and makes my interactions with creating a community of learners much more authentic. Such authenticity makes me more eager to dialogue with my students, ultimately making my job more fulfilling and rewarding. This brings me to self-determination and the *willed curriculum* (a term I coined), which are important concepts that I will explore in this paper. When people are afforded opportunities to self-determine and follow their will, they become more engaged. Such engagement benefits the individual, the smaller community, the larger local community, and the world at large. I believe that someone

who is passionate about something will engage and dedicate more to enhancing the experience for themselves and for others. I know this happens to me.

This paper will explore the role of music, the concepts of self-determination, the willed curriculum, and a course I created and teach at the graduate level entitled Educational Representations in Popular Culture. The course description reads as follows:

This course will examine how culture forms education and schooling and how it is being presented in popular culture. Novels, poetry, songs, television, film, the Internet, newspapers, art are all possible areas for critical exploration to examine topics such as teacher, student, administration, support staff, parents, the community, architecture and so on and how they are represented in popular culture. Part of this course will look at what role these media play within a curriculum (Nipissing University Master of Education Courses).

When I created this course, I was thinking that one could read John Holt, or Paulo Freire, or Ivan Illich, for example, to help better understand education. One, however, can also learn about education by exploring and attending to various areas of popular culture. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on music in popular culture and how it remains meaningful for me in thinking about this course and larger issues within education and beyond. In sum, I see music as a tool to challenge the status quo, make social commentary, change the world, and make the world a better place. For me, music entertains, inspires, and above all else, educates.

Evidence of how inspirational and relevant music is as a form of engagement for people is the Wikipedia page titled “List of Songs about School” (Wikipedia). The fact that people took the time to archive this list speaks volumes to me about the importance

of music in their lives and within the larger community. The desire to amass this list and share it with others is a testament to the power of music. Clearly, people were moved enough to create this list and they also were hopeful enough to think that others will be just as moved by the list they created. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this particular Wikipedia entry is that the vast majority of the hundreds of songs listed are highly critical and condemning of mainstream schooling. The fact that this list is so overwhelming in sending a particular message about mainstream schooling ought not to be ignored, but rather, embraced for its wisdom. Of course, the list of songs is incomplete and the authors of the site even acknowledge that reality: "This is an incomplete list of songs, which may never be able to satisfy certain standards for completeness" (Wikipedia).

When I think of schooling and songs, two in particular stand out for me. In perusing the list one of the songs I am thinking of is a part of the list and the other is not. *Flowers are Red* by Harry Chapin (1978) appears, and *The Logical Song* by Supertramp (1979) does not. When I think about schooling, teaching, learning, education, freedom and so on, both of these songs resonate deeply with me and express both musically and lyrically the profound thoughts and emotions that I feel as I connect with my understanding of these concepts. These songs, among others, resonate with me in very holistic ways -- mind, body, spirit, and emotions. Again, I can read about schooling from academic scholars or I can listen to songs and get similar experiences and understandings. Songs speak to me and hit my deepest core. For this reason, I truly believe that we need to increase their status among scholars and wider communities in general. Songs are an important and invaluable part of being able to understand and make sense of the world

around us. Songs, songwriters, and artists in general need to be appreciated in the same way that many academic scholars typically are revered. Their contributions to creating new knowledge and inspiring change need to be valued as worthwhile and earnest by academics. Of course, I am making the academic argument here because of the nature of this medium and one goal of this paper, which is aimed at an academic audience.

It seems to make sense at this point for me to say something about self-determination and the willed curriculum and then to move onto how the two songs I mentioned fit within these worldviews. In my 2012 book (*The Willed Curriculum, Unschooling, and Self-Direction: What do Love, Trust, Respect, Care, and Compassion Have to do with Learning?*), I make the argument, which is in part ethical, for self-determination. Curricular theorists talk about the planned curriculum, the learned curriculum, the assessed curriculum, the hidden curriculum, the taught curriculum and so on. I felt that there was a need to speak about curriculum from a self-determined approach and so I coined the term the *willed curriculum*. The willed curriculum refers to learner empowerment. It argues that the learner needs to determine what, where, and how they learn. It recognizes the importance of the learners' role in their own learning. By coining the term the willed curriculum, I wanted to, in part, provide curricular theorists with a language that will help them explore a curriculum that is willed and consistent with self-determination.

Unfortunately, our current mainstream schooling system and learning philosophy diminishes the role of the learner. The curriculum is externally imposed and the state, teachers, parents, and other like-minded parties, decide what learners need to learn, when,

and how. Instead, the willed curriculum champions learner empowerment and recognizes that learners should have control over their learning.

The book, in part, is divided into chapters that elucidate the importance of love, trust, respect, care, and compassion in learning. With regards to love, I believe that it needs to be at the center of a healthy learning experience. It is helpful and ethical for a person to choose what they are passionate about, what to love, and for learners to have the freedom to explore that, preferably within the context of an unconditional loving and supportive environment. Unfortunately, our current mainstream system is about imposing curriculum on learners whether they are interested in it or not. It is very top/down and from my worldview this is damaging to learners and wounds people deeply. It results in people doing things out of compulsion or fear rather than love.

Trust also plays an important role when we think about the willed curriculum. In his book *How Children Learn*, John Holt (1989) wrote that he could sum everything he has written about in this book in two words: trust children (p. xii). I could not agree more. Trust to me is critical in a number of senses. First, we need to trust children so that they can grow up to be healthy human beings who have followed their own will to achieve and grow in areas that they love. Second, learners also need to trust in themselves to have the confidence and support to follow their passions. This creates a respectful environment that is caring and compassionate.

Similarly, self-determination is about allowing people to be empowered and to decide the direction in which they choose to grow. This should not be confused with narcissism or extreme individualism, but should be seen as a very democratic and loving way of integrating people into the larger world. Love, trust, respect, care, and compassion

ensure that the “I” and the “they” are connected in very holistic ways, and that the experience does not degrade into a selfish condition. At the same time, it is not about everyone being the same, but about there being a political system and a political will that allows everyone to grow and thrive, and a recognition that we always live in communities and not simply as one community. In this way, hopefully, a strong political system will ensure that everyone can be different yet coexist.

One big point that I emphasize in the book and that I want to emphasize here is that self-determination is a way that we all learn best and it is something that we all do. Self-determination is not something new or unique but it is ubiquitous and we need to pay attention to it in our lives and become more mindful of doing it when we do it. Each of us has learned things and will continue to learn things in a willed way. We need to recognize how capable we are and how powerful a way of learning it is as we do it.

Many of these insights can be gleaned by reading academic scholars, but it can also be understood by experiencing songs. For example, as I listen to *Flowers are Red* I hear similar sentiments around teaching, learning, education, schooling, freedom, and so on. In listening to the song, I make connections with the willed curriculum. When Chapin sings,

The little boy went first day of school
He got some crayons and started to draw
He put colors all over the paper
For colors was what he saw
And the teacher said “What you doin’ young man”
“I’m paintin’ flowers,” he said
She said, “It’s not the time for art young man
And anyway flowers are green and red
There’s a time for everything young man
And a way it should be done

In reading this criticism it quickly becomes clear that schools are top/down and not about the learner and the learners' interest. I do not see love, trust, respect, care, and compassion, but control and indoctrination. Rather, mainstream schooling is about shaping and molding people rather than allowing them to become creative and imaginative. This, of course, is just a small sample of what I see and understand. I feel that I can write a book on this stanza alone, but want to limit myself to the point at hand, which is that songs are a powerful medium and should be embraced and taken seriously by all of us, including scholars. Songs challenge us to think and help us develop a deeper and more profound understanding of the world around us. Hopefully such understanding will assist us to act in more positive ways.

In *Flowers are Red* there is a clear conflict between the boy and the teacher, where the teacher believes that things should be done the way they have always been done and the boy believes otherwise. In the song, the learner says,

There are so many colors in the rainbow
So many colors in the morning sun
So many colors in the flower and I see every one

The teacher disagrees and puts the learner in the corner. The learner eventually conforms and relents. The learner's spirits have been broken and the learner has been wounded.

Powerfully, the song does not end there. There is hope and the hope is in adopting a more willed approach. The learner moves to another school and the new teacher has a very different worldview, a different psychology, and pedagogy, one that I see as more democratic, ethical, and laudable. Chapin sings,

The teacher there was smilin'
She said, "Painting should be fun
And there are so many colors in a flower
So let's use every one

This approach is definitely an improvement. The only question that still arises for me is where does the power lie? Can the students decide whether to participate or not? Can they decide to opt out and do something else instead? Or can they decide to just be? For me, until learners have real choices, activities that they can freely embrace or reject, then there is still a need for radical transformation. I am not suggesting that certain teaching and learning strategies should never be used, but what I am suggesting is that learners need to be the ones to determine which approach they choose to use and what content they choose to learn. I am not trying to replace one teaching method with another, or one hierarchy with another, but what I am hoping to convey is that the learner should decide how and what they want to learn.

What I am suggesting to you is not merely a nice theoretical possibility. There are real people who are adopting this approach both in and out of schools, and, of course, as I have suggested earlier, we all learn in this way and we need to be mindful of how it works and we need to expand our use of it. Thankfully there are people acting in this way and showing us how successful and gentle this approach is. In terms of schools, there are free schools, and democratic schools, the Sudbury school, the Albany Free School, North Star and so on. There is also a branch on homeschooling that some refer to as unschooling that fosters willed learning.

Similarly, the *Logical Song* also inspires thoughts of willed learning in me as I listen to the lyrics and feel the music. I believe that, unfortunately, young people are the last acceptably oppressed group. We do things to young people and treat them in ways that we would never dream of doing to any other group. *The Logical Song* begins,

When I was young it seemed that life was so wonderful

A miracle, oh it was beautiful, magical
And all the birds in the trees
Well they'd be singing so happily
Joyfully, playfully watching me
But then they send me away
To teach me how to be sensible
Logical, responsible, practical
And then they showed me a world
Where I could be so dependable
Clinical, intellectual, cynical

This song, once again, expresses a certain vision of schooling that is consistent with what you would find in many academic works. As many academics argue and as *The Logical Song* expresses, things seem to be going well until the child is sent to school and then things change. Also, that the purpose of schooling is not about freedom and liberation, but about control and indoctrination, becomes clear as I experience the song. As you enter schooling you get to the point where you lose touch with who you are. Hodgson sings, "I know it sounds absurd please tell me who I am." In one of the most powerful lines he sings, "We'd like to feel you're acceptable, respectable, presentable, a vegetable." This powerful metonymic list evokes powerful emotions and thoughts in me every time I listen to it, and that is the power of music. The feelings and thoughts may change, but they are always present, evocative, and provocative.

Needless to say the Education Representations and Popular Cultures course is one of my favourites. As a community of learners, we learn and grow together. I know that learners appreciate the experience because the comments I get, both formal and informal, are very positive. As academics, one thing we can do is to continue to create spaces like this where people can come together and embrace the power and commentary we get from cultural artifacts. Given my experience, I strongly encourage other people to create similar courses and communities to allow an increasing number of people to explore

these insights. It does not matter what medium is used to evoke powerful emotions and thoughts that lead to change and action in the world, as long as we are always inspired to act, and to act in such a way that we are making the world a more loving, trusting, respectful, caring, and compassionate place and space. As they do for so many if not all of us, songs continue to enhance my mind, body, spirit, and emotions. We should not ignore or deny the power of songs but we need to respect the creators and the songs' ability to provoke thoughts, actions, and emotions.

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